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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the nature and extent of diversity in news sources used by newspapers and the extent to which those sources were identified by the newspapers. A content analysis was conducted of 846 front page, straight news stories that appeared during two randomly constructed weeks in two national newspapers (the "New York Times" and the "Washington Post") and four local newspapers published in North Carolina. The stories were categorized as staff written or wire service originated, while sources were coded according to their affiliation with and position in an organization, and by whether they were identified by name and position in the story. The results showed that news stories appearing in both the national and the local newspapers and those written by both staff members and wire services relied heavily on government sources who were primarily men in executive positions. Many of these sources were so veiled that it was not possible to determine very much about them. Most news stories originated through routine channels, such as news conferences and press releases. The findings suggest that commonly held pluralistic beliefs about the role of the press in American society are too simplistic and should be expanded to consider how news agenda are shaped by those in power outside the newsroom. (FL)

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INVISIBLE POWER:

NEWS SOURCES AND THE LIMITS OF DIVERSITY

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INVISIBLE POWER: NEWS SOURCES AND THE LIMITS OF DIVERSITY

During the 1970's the study of news, in general, and news sources, in particular, underwent a significant transformation. News was studied initially as information, apparently packaged by benevolent semi-public utilities. Soon, however, researchers began to study news as a product manufactured by large, complex, profit-oriented organizations. Focusing on constraints on the diversity of voices and opinions in news, this more recent research extended the level of analysis to include sociological as well as psychological explanations of news production. The social responsibility perspective, having guided much news research since the Hutchins' Commission Report on the Social Responsibility of the Press in 1947, began giving way to a theoretical frame which acknowledged the role of news in the process of social control.

Much of this research was based on case studies or other observational methods. Many of the theoretical advances in this area were due to the contextual richness that these methods revealed. What was lost, however, was a more generalizable benchmark of the status of diversity at any one moment in time. The last broad-based, systematic assessment of news source diversity was published by Sigal (1973) nearly ten years ago. During that decade, not only has the theoretical debate become more lively and more sophisticated, but substantial changes have taken place in the political, organizational, and commercial environment of the news industry. A general recalibration, on the order of Sigal's study, regarding the nature and

extent of diversity of news sources and news channels, which takes into account these developments, is called for. This is the purpose of the present study. To accomplish this task it will be necessary to briefly review the evidence to date on news source diversity, the changing environment of the news industry, and several of the contending theories of social control which might be relevant to news sources and the dissemination of news.

News Sources and Diversity

Diversity of sources in the American press can mean many different things depending on the theory of democracy subscribed to. From a classical democratic perspective, diversity implies representativeness-- a diverse representation of political and social elites and non-elites, of organized and unorganized individuals, and governmental as well as non-governmental figures. From an elite democratic or elite pluralistic perspective, the meaning of diversity would be much more constrained. Diversity would imply that elite representatives of the various competing interest groups would be heard. In either case an important distinction must be made between diversity and range. Diversity can, but need not, mean a broad range of sources. It is possible to have a great deal of variety within a relatively narrow range of sources through the presentation of trivial differences among them. It was with this distinction in mind that Westergaard (1977) warned "(liberal democratic theory) focuses on diversity of debate, critiques and contest within set parameters, but is indifferent to the existence and social shape of those parameters."

Whatever the definition adopted, the evidence gathered over the last decade points to a number of explanations as to why diversity in sources should not be expected. Gans (1979) identifies several sets of such explanations. At the heart of each explanation is the modern prerequisite

of routinization in order to systematically produce news from the infinite number of possible activities that occur each day. Journalist-centered explanations argue that news shaping is based on the professional news judgment of journalists while organizational explanations focus on how story and source selection is influenced by the commercial needs and structural arrangements of news operations. Other explanations stress factors outside the news organization. These may include technological, economic and ideological factors. Gans suggests, however, that all of these explanations are partially accurate and certainly not mutually exclusive: "Sources, journalists, and audiences coexist in a system, although it is closer to being a tug of war than a functionally interrelated organism."

Given the competing interests that must be satisfied in the day-to-day production of news it seems reasonable to expect that the sources who will dominate news coverage will be elites who have a vested interest in the preservation of things as they are. These will be the individuals who will best meet the two criteria for source selection identified by Gans (1979). Elites are most likely to meet the availability criterion through their power to attract journalists' attention and restrain subordinates from contacting journalists, and their geographic and social proximity to journalists. They are also better able to meet the criterion of suitability. Elites, due to their centrality in power systems, can supply a great deal of information without unduly taxing their organizations or the resources of journalists. They also are more likely to meet standard definitions of reliability, trustworthiness, authoritativeness and articulateness.

Sigal's (1973) findings, based on a content analysis of the New York Times and Washington Post over a 20-year period, confirms many of the expectations of limited diversity, in terms of news sources and the channels through which news is gathered. Sigal found that 58.2 percent of the news in

all stories came through routine channels, such as official proceedings, press conferences, press releases, etc., which are predominately under source control. By comparison, only 15.7 percent of the news came through informal channels such as background briefings, leaks, non-governmental proceedings, etc. Enterprise channels such as interviews, spontaneous events and independent research, accounted for only 25.8 percent of the news. The primary source of most news stories was U. S. officials (46.5 percent) followed by foreign and international officials and agencies (27.5 percent). In fact, government officials accounted for over three-fourths of all news sources. The prospects for source domination of the news and for the constriction of diversity would appear high.

The Changing Environment

What influences, if any, might account for possible shifts in this pattern of concentration over the last ten years? Sigal (1973) suggested several. The trend toward news industry concentration and the decline of competition may result in larger news staffs and more bureaus making the cultivation of a greater diversity of sources possible. It may also have the opposite effect. Also, competition among the media may be on the rise, stimulating changes in story coverage and source selection. With television taking over the headline service of newspapers, the printed press may continue its movement toward more trend and background stories. Newspapers may discover that journals of opinion and other specialty magazines are becoming their principle source of competition.

Sigal also points out that the generation of young Americans whose political values crystallized during the turbulent Sixties will now have begun to move into the professional mainstream, perhaps influencing story and source selections with their distinct political ideology. Finally, Sigal

points to the constraining role rapidly developing technology might play in the news source selection process. Technological development and centralization of control, as Shiller (1980) argues, seem to go hand in hand.

Other important changes during the last decade which might influence source access and journalist control include the changed political climate following Watergate and the prolonged economic stagnation of the late 1970's. Watergate may not only have highlighted the importance of investigative reporting for editors,making them more willing to expend resources for such work, but it may also have set new performance ideals for reporters. In addition, the frustration among the public over the lack of success of the tried and true economic cures may have stimulated reporters to start looking elsewhere for innovative ideas about not only economics but government in general.

Since some of these factors predict a trend toward concentration and others predict greater diversity it is impossible to arrive at a precise expectation of the state of news source diversity today. The data will have to help us answer this question.

Theories of Social Control

Earlier, two justifications were offered for empirically reassessing the degree of diversity in news sources and news channels. The first straightforwardly argued that much has changed in the social environment of the news industry so it is about time for another look. The second argues that this re-examination may be more meaningful if interpreted in light of recent theoretical advances in the field. It is this second justification to which we turn our attention now.

Gans' (1979) review of various theories and his own attempt at synthesizing a theory of news production are instructive in helping media scholars come to a fuller understanding of the myriad of forces involved. But they do not go far enough, as Gitlin (1980) points out, in unravelling the full implications of Gans' conclusion that the production of news is a system of power. Gitlin proposes "a more ample theoretical domain" to explain the relationship of news to the exercise of power. We would like to propose, borrowing from Gaventa's (1980) analysis of power relationships in Appalachia, that there are actually three theoretical frames, of which the Gramscian model, as developed by Lukes (1974), is the most advanced. Each of these perspectives and their implications for news sources and news channel research will be discussed briefly.

The One-Dimensional Approach. The one-dimensional approach, according to Gaventa (1980), is due primarily to democratic pluralists such as Robert Dahl and Nelson Polsby. The key to this approach is the belief that the exercise of power is overt and therefore observable. It is assumed that grievances are readily recognizable and acted upon. The second assumption is that participation "occurs within decisionmaking arenas, which are in turn assumed to be open to virtually any organized group" (Gaventa 1980). Consequently, it is argued that if decision-making is open, then leaders may be studied as representatives of mass interests rather than as elites. Westergaard (1977) adds a final assumption that the competing interest groups represented in the decision-making arena are independent.

For Gaventa (1980), perhaps the most serious flaw in this pluralist conception of power is the logical conclusion that non-participation is not a political problem. If one wants to participate, opportunities exist. Non-participation is taken as an indication of disinterest.

If this one-dimensional approach to the analysis of power is applied to evaluation of the role of news sources and news channels, the investigation will be severely curtailed. The approach, in many respects, forces the researcher to accept the conclusion that the system is functioning adequately or at worst is in need of minor reform (Westergaard, 1977). There are several reasons for this. The first is that the process of newsgathering is structured to incorporate pluralistic assumptions about the political and social system. Elites are turned to because they are assumed to be suitable spokespersons for their organizations. Efforts toward the routinization of news gathering result in centralizing news gathering to correspond to the bureaucratic organization of traditional sources of power. Consequently, the bias toward elite sources will not be seen as an excess but as a legitimation of the existing system. A second related reason is that the absence of truly divergent voices will be seen as a sign of silent consent -- the approval of the silent majority.

According to this basic pluralistic approach, then, diversity and identification are the only two relevant criteria for evaluating news sources. Sigal's (1973) findings concerning the high proportion of government officials as news sources suggest that patterns of source selection are inadequate, even by these standards. And Culbertson (1975) found that over half of all stories coded in New York Times and The Washington Post during a randomly constructed two weeks in 1974 contained at least one unnamed source. Other approaches to the study of power suggest that these criteria may only scratch the surface, however.

The Two-Dimensional Approach. Gaventa (1980) attributes the two-dimensional approach to the study of power to E. E. Schattschneider, Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz. In this view the second face of power is domination not only

within the decision-making arena but also in deciding who will be allowed to participate in the decision-making process and what issues will be debated. In Schnattschneider's (1960) words, "some issues are organized into politics while others are organized out." Parenti (1970) puts the issue similarly: "One of the most important aspects of power is not to prevail but to determine the agenda of struggle -- to determine whether certain questions ever reach the competition stage." Given this perspective, the meaning of nonparticipation is significantly transformed.

Adoption of the two-dimensional approach to the study of power places the researcher interested in the relationship between news sources and the exercise of power in a challenging position. It suggests that content analysis, employed alone, is inadequate for the task of uncovering significant power relationships. Simply examining the manifest agenda for some indication of news source selectivity exercising agenda control is an exercise too late in the process of dominance to yield any significant advance in understanding.

Much agenda-setting research has missed this important point, stressed by Cobb and Elder (1975) in their proposal for the study of agenda-building--the process by which issues achieve formal agenda status in the political system or how an issue becomes a topic for serious political debate. To some extent, by the time an issue reaches the public, by the time certain sources have been selected and others ignored, the key decision-making has already been exercised. The two-dimensional approach points to a serious limitation of the present study or any similar type of study, but it is a limitation that is better recognized than ignored.

The Three-Dimensional Approach. George Lukes (1974), building on a foundation laid by Antonio Gramsci, contests a primary assumption of the two-dimensional approach. Bachrach and Baratz (1970) argue that if an observer can discover no grievances in a population or if there appears to be universal acceptance of the status quo, it is impossible to empirically determine whether there is true acceptance or enforced compliance. Lukes (1974) counters with an argument that forms the core of the three-dimensional approach (or ideological hegemony in Gitlin's (1980) terms). Lukes' position is that the assumption of consensus in the absence of a grievance is to ignore the possibility of manipulated consensus. Furthermore, Lukes argues, not only may the powerless be unaware of the manipulation, but the powerful, through the security of their positions, also may become oblivious to the mechanisms of domination. Gaventa (1980) further explains Lukes' position as follows:

> The means by which A may (exercise power) goes significantly beyond those allowed by the first two approaches. First, 'A may exercise power over B by getting him to do what he does not want to do, but he also exercises power over him by influencing, shaping or determining his very wants.' ... Secondly, this may happen in the absence of observable conflict, which may have been successfully averted', though there must be latent conflict... Thirdly, the analysis of power must ... allow for consideration of the many ways in which potential issues are kept out of politics, whether through the operation of social forces and institutional practices or through indiviuals' decisions." (p.12)

Even more than the two-dimensional approach, the three-dimensional approach sets an extremely difficult challenge for the news researcher. How does one study a non-event? How does one identify the "means through

which power influences, shapes or determines conceptions of necessities, possibilitities, and strategies of challenge in situations of latent conflict (Gaventa, 1980)?" The answer may require, as Gaventa suggests, "locating the power processes behind the social construction of meanings and patterns that serve to get B to act and believe in a manner in which B otherwise might not, to A's benefit and B's detriment."

The three-dimensional approach holds at least two related implications for the study of news sources, particularly through content analysis. Since content analysis can yield only a portrait of an outcome, it must be understood that the news sources selected and presented must be studied as a potential outcome of the hegemonic process. Establishing the connecting links between the process and the outcome has been a primary task of several recent studies (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978; Gitlin, 1980) but cannot be accomplished through content analysis alone. This approach also points to the importance of attempting to establish links between news presentation, including source selection, and political conceptions. The extent to which the portrayal of news as managed conflict between powerful elites contributes to a sense of powerlessness and resignation would be an example of research in this vein. Similarly, the study of identification of sources could be seen as the first step in understanding nonparticipation. Lack of identification of the actors involved in conflicts may serve to protect the actors from mobilization of non-elites.

The analysis that follows will deal primarily with the basic criteria of press performance as suggested by the pluralistic perspective. These more complex views of social power, suggest, however, that if we find a lack of diversity of sources and a general failure to identify those sources that pluralistic assumptions regarding the nature of social power

in this society may be wrong, or at the least, too simplistic.

METHOD

A content analysis was completed of two randomly constructed six-day weeks (no Sundays were included) of front page (and jumps) straight news stories appearing in the New York Times, the Washington Post, and four North Carolina newspapers (the Charlotte Observer, the Fayetteville Observer, the Asheville Citizen and the Raleigh News and Observer) during 1979 and 1980. There were two randomly constructed weeks for each year.

The New York Times and the Washington Post are used to replicate parts of Sigal's (1973) and Culbertson's (1975) studies. The years 1979 and 1980 are used to continue the pattern of five-year intervals begun by Sigal and continued by Culbertson.

The four North Carolina newspapers are used to examine differences between local/state newspapers and national papers like the Washington Post and the News York Times. Donohue, Tichenor and Olien (1973) found that local newspapers are more apt to report consensus stories and less apt to report conflict stories. Culbertson (1975) found differences among local/state newspapers and national newspapers in the degree to which sources were veiled.

Coders for the study were 16 journalism majors at the University of North Carolina (graduates and undergraduates). The coding involved two units of analysis. Coders first analysed the story itself and then each indiviual source within the story.

Stories were categorized in the following way:

Conflict/Non-conflict: Tichenor, Donohue and Olien's definition of conflict was used. "A process of interaction among social roles, based upon

disparities in views or positions about ends, means or means-ends relationships (Tichenor, et.al., 1980)." An example of a conflict story would be one which dealt with the disagreement among various organizations and groups over the use of nuclear power as an energy source. Any story that was not a conflict story was considered a non-conflict story for the purpose of the analysis.

Topic: Coders chose from 17 possible topic choices: military, politics (stories about election campaigns, candidates for offices, political parties, etc.) the government, crime, disaster/accident, labor and unions, economics (stories about the stock market, the economy, taxes, etc.), business, public moral problems (stories about issues such as abortion, teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, etc.), health, welfare (stories dealing with the general welfare of the public, such as services to the aged, handicapped, etc., or stories dealing with the protection of the public), education, arts, science and inventions, energy/environment, religion, miscellaneous (stories not fitting into any of the 16 other categories). Coders could categorize each story according to its primary, secondary or tertiary topic. For purposes of the analysis, only the primary topic chosen by the coder was examined.

Channel: Each story was coded according to whether the primary channel of information used was routine (examples are official proceedings, press releases, press conferences, etc.) informal (background briefings, leaks non-governmental proceedings) or enterprise (interviews, spontaneous events, independent research, etc.).

Origin of story: Stories were categorized as staff written (either bylined or not bylined). Culbertson's definition of staff written was used: "All stories not clearly identified as coming from a wire service, syndicate or

other non-staff source" (Culbertson, 1975), a wire service story (either AP, UPI or other wire) or other (any story that doesn't fit into the other categories).

The origin of the story (wire service, staff written) and whether the story appeared in a national or state/local paper were controlled for in the analysis, in order to examine the differences among national staff written and state/local staff written stories in the treatment of sources and the use of channels.

Sources were categorized in the following way:

Affiliation: Each source was coded according to his/her institutional affiliation. Coders chose from 25 possible affiliations, which were created by expanding a list used in an ABC News-Harris Survey of public confidence in 13 different institutions (Harris, 1979). For the analysis, the 25 possible affiliations were grouped into eight general categories: U.S. Government, state government, local government, foreign government, affiliated U.S. citizen (which included medicine, religion, business, law firm, organized labor, special interest group, higher education, the media, political party, other affiliated U.S. citizen), unaffiliated U.S. citizen, foreign citizen and other. An example of an unaffiliated U.S. citizen would be an individual who witnessed an accident, for example, and was identified in a news story only by name.

Organizational status: Each source was coded in terms of position in an organization. Categories are: executive (someone who is in a decision-making position -- someone who helps to run an organization), a spokesperson (someone who speaks for the organization--examples are a public relations person or a public information person), worker (any non-administrative person in an organization). Examples are secretaries, factory workers, technicians, etc.), position not specified (although the position is not specified, there is some

affiliation mentioned. An example would be John Doe of Data Resources. This names the organization, but does not indicate his position there), and other (this category was used when the source of the story was veiled and/or where no occupational affiliation was given at all. An example would be John Doe of New York City).

Sex: Sources were coded as male or female if it was ascertainable from the story.

Identification: Sources were coded as being veiled (The source's name is not reported and there is not sufficient information about the source to allow identification. An example would be White House sources). or unveiled (The source's name is included in the story, or there is sufficient information about the source to allow identification. An example would be President of the AFL-CIO.).

Three inter-coder reliability checks were completed during the period the stories were being coded. The inter-coder reliability rate ranged from a high of 84 percent to a low of 80 percent.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 846 front page news stories were analyzed. Combined, these stories used 5,248 sources. Staff written stories in national papers (the New York Times and the Washington Post) averaged 7.6 sources. The average number of sources in staff written local newspaper stories from the four North Carolina newspapers was 5.6 and the average for wire stories was 5.4. No national staff written story used more than 26 sources. The maximum number of sources for local staff written stories was 16; the maximum for wire stories was 19. We will look first at results in terms of diversity of sources. Second, we will examine identification of sources and finally, the channels of information will be discussed.

Diversity of Sources

Table 1 shows the percentages of source affiliations used in national, local and wire stories. The affiliations shown in this table are grouped from the original 25 affiliations used during the coding process (see Table 2). The "total" column indicates that 31 percent, or almost one-third, of all sources in front page news stories were affiliated with the U.S. government. Over half of all sources were affiliated with some governmental body. By comparison, only one-quarter of all sources were affiliated with non-governmental organizations and less than one-third of all sources were non-government-affiliated U.S. citizens. It is also notable that 11.3 percent of all sources were coded as "other". This means that coders could not determine any affiliation (including citizenship) for over one-tenth of the sources. We will return to this issue when we discuss the frequency of veiled sources.

It is interesting, but not unexpected, that national and wire stories were quite similar in terms of source affiliation. Local stories, however, differed greatly from national and wire stories in almost every source affiliation category. Not surprisingly, local stories included fewer U.S. Government sources, and more state and local government sources than did national and wire stories. Local stories also attributed more information to non-governmental sources, notably affiliated and unaffiliated U.S. citizens, than did national or wire stories. The local newspaper appears to allow for more diverse representation across all types of affiliations than either the national papers or the wire services.

Table 2 shows ungrouped source affiliations (the original 25 affiliations mentioned above) again by story origin. Here we see more precisely the heavy reliance upon the executive and legislative branches of U.S. government,

particularly within national and wire stories. It is also notable that, overall, 7.3 percent of the sources were affiliated with "business." In Table 1 we saw that one-quarter of all sources were affiliated U.S. citizens. At first glance, this appeared to indicate rather strong representation of non-elites. Here we see, however, that business, which is arguably elite in this society, dominated the affiliated U.S. citizen group category.

Some of the differences by story origin should also be mentioned. Wire service stories relied more heavily upon White House sources than did national or local stories. Local stories, which attributed more information to state government sources, cited the executive branch of state government most frequently. Table 1 made local stories look "good" in terms of pluralistic expectations because over one-third of their sources were affiliated U.S. citizens. Table 2, however, shows a much heavier reliance upon business sources by local stories than by national or wire stories. On the whole, local stories still seem to best meet the basic expectations of a pluralistic medium. Local stories relied more heavily upon special interest groups than did either of the others and they used more unaffiliated U.S. citizens as sources (Unaffiliated citizens are, in a certain sense, the true non-elites).

Affiliation by story origin is examined in terms of organizational status in Table 3. The most notable finding here is the very heavy reliance upon executives regardless of their affiliation or the origin of the story. This seems to be a clear indication of the dominance of elite news sources. Also interesting are the relatively heavy use of workers within local government, regardless of story origin, and the strong showing of spokespersons in the affiliated U.S. citizen category. This last

finding might be due to the use of public relations personnel by businesses and other non-government organizations. (It should be pointed out that the percentages for foreign government and foreign citizens in local stories may be suspect, because of the extremely small number of foreign sources (about four) in locally written news.)

Table 4 is self-explanatory. Roughly 50 percent of the sources were identifiable by sex. Of these, barely 10 percent were women. Women are badly under-represented regardless of story origin. This may be due, in part, to the under-representation of women in social institutions. The blame can not be laid solely at the feet of the media. Two studies of network television news reported similarly low percentages (1977: 15%; 1979: 7%) of female newsmakers (Window Dressing on the Set, 1977, 1979.)

Insofar as diversity is concerned, we have documented, as did Sigal (1973), heavy representation of government, executives and men in front page news stories. Thus a disproportionate share of news is coming from elite sources. Although the performance of local papers appears more pluralistic in some categories (use of affiliated U.S. citizens), local stories were about the same as national and wire stories in terms of the use of executives and in terms of the infrequent reliance upon female sources.

Channels of Information

A related approach to evaluating the diversity of sources in the news media is to examine the channels of information. Ideally, a newspaper should have a high proportion of enterprise stories compared with routine and informal stories. When newspapers use routine channels, they allow the source more control over their news product than when enterprise channels are used.

Table 5 shows that front page national and wire stories depended very heavily upon routine channels, particularly when compared to their reliance upon enterprise channels. Local stories, however, actually used enterprise

channels slightly more frequently than they used routine channels. Thus we find yet another apparent example of local stories performing "better" according to ideal pluralistic expectations.

Table 6 presents routine channels by story topic and origin. Again, although percentages vary from topic to topic, there is evidence of heavy dependence upon routine channels. Wire stories used fewer than 50 percent routine channels for only the disaster/accident reports. National stories were less than 50 percent routine only when the topics were the military or disaster/accidents. Again, however, local papers seem to have performed better. Local stories were more than 50 percent routine only when reporting on government, crime and the economy.

The percentage of conflict stories which used routine, informal or enterprise channels appears in Table 7 (controlling for origin of story). The most notable finding here is that routine stories deal with a great deal of conflict at the national and local levels. Conflict reported in routine stories is likely to be less threatening to the participants. Routine conflict is a case of "agreeing to disagree." Although reporting conflict is one of the ideal functions of a medium in a pluralistic society, routine conflict is controlled by the sources and is thus less likely to disrupt the formal agenda.

Our analysis of channels of information reveals a heavy overall reliance on routine reporting. These findings lend credence to Sigal's (1973) suggestion that newspapers have relinquished control of news to their sources. They also suggest that little has changed in the past decade.

Identification of Sources

Another basic criterion or ideal expectation for media in a

pluralistic society is that they should, as a rule, identify news sources. Identification facilitates social mobilization. It allows readers to know who, specifically, agrees or disagrees with them on any given issue. This, in turn, may permit easier formation of interest groups for the purpose of shaping the formal agenda.

Table 8 shows the percentage of unidentified or veiled sources in conflict and non-conflict stories, controlling for story origin. The "total" row indicates that slightly over half the sources cited in national and in wire stories were veiled. By comparison, less than 40 percent of the sources in local stories were veiled. This confirms Culbertson's (1975) finding that local papers veiled sources less frequently than national papers did. Culbertson suggested that this may be due to less frequent reporting of conflict by local papers (the logic being that conflict poses a greater threat to sources and leads more frequently to requests for anonymity). Table 7 shows that local papers do indeed report less conflict, but Culbertson's complete hypothesis is not supported by Table 8. There appears to be no difference between conflict and non-conflict stories in terms of source veiling.

The percentage of veiled sources by story topic, controlling for story origin, is presented in Table 9. Stories about the military used a greater proportion of veiled sources than did any other story topic, regardless of story origin. This may be due to the sensitivity of military issues, but it may also be because of the emphasis on regimentation and discipline in military organizations. Perhaps individual identification in news stories is generally frowned upon within an institution which de-emphasizes individual effort in favor of group effort. The greatest differences by story origin appeared for economy and health topics. Sources were veiled much less frequently

in local economy stories than in national and wire stories about the economy.

Table 10 shows the percentage of veiled sources by news channel, controlling for story origin. Here we see little difference in the use of veiled sources, regardless of story origin.

Our examination of source identification has shown that a very high proportion of sources in front page news stories were veiled, regardless of story origin. Local stories, however, seemed to do a better job of attributing information to identifiable sources.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the diversity of sources appearing in news stories is an important task. While content analysis alone cannot describe the entire process of news selection and presentation, it can begin to give us some idea of where power in a society lies and how the media are affected by that power.

By the simplest of criteria outlined here, newspapers have failed to live up to the expectations of the media in a pluralistic democracy. From this analysis of 846 stories and the 5,248 sources used in those stories, we have found little evidence of a pluralistic press. Front page news stories in both the national and the local press and from the wire services rely heavily on government sources who are primarily men in executive positions. Many of these sources are so veiled it is not possible to tell even that much about them. Most reporting relies on routine channels such as press conferences and press releases. These findings parallel those of Sigal and Culbertson, which suggests

that not much has changed in the use of news sources in the past decade, despite major technological and organizational changes in the industry.

These findings lead to two alternative sets of conclusions. First, we might continue to assume that this society is indeed a pluralistic democracy and the press is simply not doing its job. The surprise with which Americans viewed the takeover of the American embassy in Iran is due in large part to media reliance on official sources for much of their information about Iran and events taking place there. And discussion of the pros and cons of nuclear power as an alternative source of energy was virtually non-existent in the media until the Three Mile Island accident (Friedman 1981). While this criticism of the media may be valid, other, more complicated factors probably are at work as well.

According to some political theorists, American society cannot be viewed as a simple pluralistic democracy in which battles for political power are fought openly and reported upon fully by the press. These theorists suggest that we would come to a better understanding of how this political system works and the role of the press in it if we were to acknowledge that much political decision-making is not done in public view. Indeed, according to some theorists, what appears in the press may be only that information which the powerful want the public to know.

While this content analysis is not sufficient evidence on which to base this kind of argument, it does offer an intriguing starting point. If the relationship of decision-makers and the press is not based on pluralistic assumptions, what is it based on? Why is there such a limited diversity of sources; why such a heavy reliance on

governmental sources and non-enterprise reporting? Why such little identification of those engaged in political conflict?

Theorists (e.g., Lukes, Schattschneider) who have gone beyond the one-dimensional pluralistic approach to political power argue that this state of affairs should be expected in a system where the elite control the political agenda. Unfortunately, simple content analysis cannot tell us how this process works.

In sum, this analysis of the front page news stories of both local and national staff-written and wire service stories has shown that the treatment of news sources in newspapers has changed little over the past decade. The analysis also suggests that our expectations may be somewhat misdirected by adhering to a simple pluralistic perspective on press performance. Future research of news source selection and presentation must address the issues raised by alternative perspectives on the press and power in this society.

TABLE 1

Source Affiliation by Story Origin (Percents)

Source Affiliation	Story Origin* National Staff	Local Staff	Wire Service	Total
U.S. Government	32.3%	15.9%	35.6%	31.0%
State Government	5.4	14.9	6.4	7.3
Local Government	5.9	17.2	4.6	7.1
Foreign Government	11.1	0.4	12.7	10.0
Affiliated U.S. Citizen	25.1	36.0	18.9	24.4
Unaffiliated U.S. Citizen	4.3	6.0	3.7	4.3
Foreign Citizen	4.2	0.4	6.8	4.6
Other	11.8	9.3	11.4	11.3
Total %	100.1%	100.1%	100.1%	100.0%
(N) Sources	(2363)	(804)	(2048)	(5215)

*In this and subsequent tables, stories have been grouped according to whether they were staff written or obtained from one of the wire services. The Washington Post and The New York Times have been combined to represent national newspapers and the four North Carolina newspapers have been combined to represent local newspapers. Wire service stories may have appeared in both national and local newspapers.

X^2=514.86 with 14 df, $p \leq .05$

TABLE 2

Source Affiliation (Ungrouped) by Story Origin (Percents)

Source Affiliation	Story Origin: National Staff	Local Staff	Wire Service	Total
U.S. Government				
Executive Branch	10.3%	2.5%	10.8%	9.3%
Legislative	8.9	2.9	8.2	7.7
Judicial	3.3	2.5	1.6	2.5
White House	3.5	1.5	6.9	4.5
Military	0.7	2.6	1.8	1.4
Other U.S. Gov.	5.6	4.0	6.3	5.6
State Government				
Executive Branch	2.1	6.1	2.5	2.9
Legislative	1.0	3.0	0.9	1.3
Judicial	0.7	2.2	0.5	0.9
Other State Gov.	1.6	3.6	2.5	2.2
Local Government	5.9	17.2	4.6	7.1
Foreign Government	11.1	0.4	12.7	10.0
Affiliated U.S. Citizen				
Medicine	0.4	2.2	0.6	0.8
Religion	1.5	0.4	1.0	1.1
Business	8.5	11.6	4.3	7.3
Law Firms	2.4	3.2	1.5	2.2
Organized Labor	0.8	1.5	0.3	0.7
Special Interest Group	2.3	4.0	2.2	2.5
Higher Education	0.9	3.0	0.3	1.0
The Media	2.2	1.1	4.8	3.1
Political Party	0.8	0.3	0.7	0.7
Other Non-Gov.	5.4	8.7	3.2	5.0
Unaffiliated U.S. Citizen	4.3	6.0	3.7	4.3
Foreign Citizen	4.2	0.4	6.8	4.6
Other	11.8	9.3	11.4	11.3
Total	100.2%	100.2%	100.1%	100.0%

TABLE 3

Organizational Status of Sources by Affiliation and Story Origin*

Affiliation	Organizational Status	Story Origin: National Staff	Local Staff	Wire Service
U.S. Govt.	Executive	58.1%	52.0%	58.0%
	Spokesperson	8.3	11.0	9.6
	Worker	7.3	7.1	8.4
State Govt.	Executive	62.4%	65.8%	73.3%
	Spokesperson	11.2	7.5	3.8
	Worker	7.2	12.5	9.2
Local Govt.	Executive	64.3%	55.1%	41.5%
	Spokesperson	5.0	2.2	10.6
	Worker	22.1	21.0	26.6
Foreign Govt.	Executive	64.1%	100.0%	46.9%
	Spokesperson	6.6	0.0	11.6
	Worker	7.0	0.0	8.9
Affiliated U.S. Citizens	Executive	42.5%	47.1%	25.9%
	Spokesperson	11.1	12.1	17.3
	Worker	12.0	12.1	9.2
Foreign Citizens	Executive	23.2%	0.0%	30.9%
	Spokesperson	5.1	0.0	5.8
	Worker	12.1	66.7	15.1

*Unaffiliated U.S. Citizens and the Other category for Affiliation have been excluded from this table. Position not specified and the Other category have been excluded from the percentages for organizational status; the cumulative percentages for organizational status, therefore, do not sum to 100%.

TABLE 4

Sex of Source by Story Origin (in percents)

Sex of sources*	Story Origin: National Staff	Local Staff	Wire Service	Total
Female	10.2%	12.3%	7.5%	9.6%
Male	89.9	87.7	92.5	90.4
Total %	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
(N)	(1163)	(489)	(973)	(2625)

* These percentages are calculated for all sources that could be identified by sex.

X^2=9.38 with 2 df, $p \leq .05$

TABLE 5

Primary News Channel by Story Origin (Percents)

News Channel	Story Origin: National Staff	Local Staff	Wire Service	Total
Routine	56.1%	38.7%	64.0%	56.7%
Informal	18.0	20.4	25.0	21.6
Enterprise	26.0	40.9	11.1	21.7
Total %	100.1%	100.0%	100.1%	100.0%
N (stories)	(312)	(142)	(380)	(834)

$X^2 = 62.12$ with 4 df, $p \leq .05$

TABLE 6

Percent of Stories With Routine News Channel by Story Topic and Origin

Story Topic	Story Origin: National Staff	Local Staff	Wire Service	Total* %/(N)
Government	57.6	50.0	70.8	26.5% (221)
Politics	57.5	36.4	63.8	11.8 (98)
Crime	70.0	54.6	51.5	10.2 (85)
Economy	73.9	66.7	73.1	6.2 (52)
Energy/ Environment	68.2	47.1	72.2	9.0 (75)
Military	42.9	33.3	57.1	7.1 (59)
Business	50.0	16.7	50.0	4.1 (34)
Disaster/Accidents	41.7	36.4	44.7	7.3 (61)
Health	71.4	28.6	83.3	2.4 (20)
Total (% Routine)	56.1%	38.7%	64.0%	
N (Stories)	(312)	(142)	(380)	

* Table entries are the percent of stories in each topic area and origin that relied primarily on a routine news channel (rather than informal or enterprise). Seven topic categories were not included here since they included very few stories (The seven were: Labor and Unions; Public Moral Problems; Welfare; Education; the Arts; Science and Inventions; Religion.) 53 of the stories (17%) did not fall in any of these categories. The right column total percents and sample size is for each story topic category regardless of origin or news channel.

TABLE 7

Percent of Conflict-Centered Stories by Primary News Channel and Story Origin

Primary News Channel	Story Origin: National Staff	Local Staff	Wire Service
Routine	65.1	50.9	49.0
Informal	50.0	37.9	47.9
Enterprise	59.5	39.7	50.0

Table entries are percent of stories within each channel and point of origin that centered on conflict rather than non-conflict. Difference of proportions tests with p .05: Routine (National vs. Wire)

TABLE 8

Percent of Veiled Sources by Degree of Conflict and Story Origin

Degree of Conflict	Story Origin		
	National Staff	Local Staff	Wire Service
Conflict-centered stories	50.6	39.1	53.4
Non-conflict-centered stories	52.3	37.9	52.9
Total(%veiled)	51.2%	38.7%	53.4%

Difference of proportions tests which are significant at the .05 level: National Staff vs. Local Staff, Local Staff vs. Wire Service.

TABLE 9

Percent of Veiled Sources by Story Topic* and Story Origin

Story Topic	Story Origin		
	National Staff	Local Staff	Wire Service
Government	52.9	43.2	51.4
Politics	44.8	45.1	46.2
Crime	36.9	39.6	40.9
Economy	51.9	25.0	63.1
Energy/Environment	52.0	35.3	50.8
Military	70.8	50.0	68.3
Business	60.4	48.5	45.7
Disaster/Accidents	55.5	35.7	56.7
Health	43.8	30.8	60.0
Total(% Veiled)	51.2	38.7	53.4

* Story Topics are included here in rank order of frequency across all stories coded. Table entries are the percent of all sources used in stories in the topic category who were not identified (i.e., who were veiled).

TABLE 10

Percent of Sources Veiled by News Channel and Story Origin

News Channel	Story Origin		
	National Staff	Local Staff	Wire Service
Routine	49.2	36.1	51.8
Informal	55.8	44.1	58.1
Enterprise	51.6	38.6	50.9
Total (% Veiled)	(51.2)	(38.7)	(53.4)

Difference of proportions tests with $p \leq .05$: Routine (National vs. Local, Local vs. Wire), Informal (Local vs. Wire), Enterprise (National vs. Local, Local vs. Wire).

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